

Photo Identification

I have just read the March-April 2000 issue of *Military Review* and, as usual, enjoyed it very much. I do, however, have one correction in an otherwise fine article ("Highway to Basra and the Ethics of Pursuit" by Stacy R. Obenhaus). The photo caption on page 53 identifies several M-8 armored cars as being from Combat Command A of the 7th Armored Division and as having been destroyed north of Poteau on 18 December 1944. The vehicles' front unit markings show them as being from the 18th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron of 1st Army. The 18th and its sister squadron were employed northeast of the area when the fight began. Much of both units' equipment was destroyed.

Combat Command A received the task of taking Poteau. It did so, was driven out, then retook the town from the 1st SS Panzer Grenadier Regiment. Combat Command R had earlier reported that the road beyond Poteau was terrifically jammed with vehicles of various units that had been in the area before the German offensive.

By 19 December 1944, the remnants of the 14th Cavalry Group, of which the 18th was part, formed into a provisional troop and began screening for Combat Command R to the north. This confirms that the vehicles in the photo were of the 18th Cavalry, as the markings indicate, and not Combat Command A, which fought back and forth in the area of Poteau.

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Editor's Note: MR regrets the error. We should have read the photo and not the original caption.

The Doctrinal Problem

Doctrine is a pressing problem for the US Army. Few soldiers study, understand, practice or are tested on doctrine, and few have a working knowledge of its vocabulary. Most soldiers would probably not consider

this subject to be an issue and are fairly oblivious to its ramifications.

Over the last five years I have watched more than 70 brigades and their staffs in operation. I have visited the National Training Center (NTC) and the Joint Readiness Training Center (JRTC) as an observer of Active and Reserve Component rotations. I have participated in conferences either discussing key doctrine manuals or helping to write them. I have seen close up how the process works and who is writing doctrine.

A recent influx of new words can be traced directly to the NTC and JRTC. "Counterreconnaissance" ranks among the most used and least understood words in our professional vocabulary. In US Army Field Manual 71-100, *Division Engineer Combat Operations*, counterreconnaissance is defined as a security operation. Although this is supposedly understood, we still talk about it as if it were a distinct and separate mission.

Although the term "penetration box" is now used in several contexts, officially the term does not exist. The closest word in doctrine is "breach." When I have pointed out the discrepancy, the response has been, "That's what the commander wants to call it." Although commanders are good officers in positions of responsibility based on demonstrated performance, they cannot arbitrarily change or add to doctrine. A commander's staff has the responsibility to call this out to the commander's attention and recommend the correct word or term.

The Battle Command Training Program (BCTP) constantly finds a disconnect between the use of the words "seize" and "secure." The disconnect is primarily caused by not understanding definitions then inadvertently using one when meaning the other. "Defeat" and "destroy" also puzzle staffs and commanders. The artillery version of "destroy" (reduce by 30 percent) is not always the infantry, armor or aviation meaning. "Destroy" means different things to different branches; therefore, it would be wise to permanently re-

solve what it means across services.

At NTC, while discussing problems concerning doctrine, observers/controllers (OCs) told me their mission was not to teach doctrine. These captains and majors find themselves in a time-constrained environment where adhering to doctrine "would be great," but they have to get on with the "real" work. These officers are not slackers; they work long hours in a hostile environment. In the world's greatest training arena we do not allow time to train and sustain our staffs and commanders in our professional fundamentals.

At JRTC, highly motivated young officers also consider doctrine confining. They do not possess a firm understanding of basic doctrine. For example, one sincere captain had developed a decision-making system based on the results of targeting meetings. The results were noted on a matrix and became the next day's orders. The young soldier's system was clearly not based on the five-paragraph operation order (OPORD). As another example, a senior OC said, during an after-action review, that the military decision-making process (MDMP) was a "good technique." The MDMP is not only a good technique; it is doctrine.

At the combat training centers (CTCs), the MDMP was routinely attacked as being too cumbersome, but neither the OCs nor the training staff actually understood the process. In particular, wargaming methods were not understood or routinely practiced. We justify the use of a single or "focused" course of action (COA) because "we do not have time" to develop others. The premise of a focused COA is based on combat requirements, a seasoned commander and a fully trained staff. Manuals should reflect that this type of focused COA should only be used in combat. Except in unusual circumstances, NTC and JRTC are not the correct environment in which to use focused COAs.

Training units have an almost overwhelming urge to use matrix

orders, and OCs are reluctant to prohibit their use. Using current doctrine should be nonnegotiable at the CTCs. The argument about time is valid, but if we cannot practice doctrine at the CTCs, where do we practice?

Recently I explained to a Command and General Staff College (CGSC) graduate that a brigade's cross-FLOT (forward line of own troops) air assault was not a deep attack. Another recent graduate could not be moved from the belief that once a commander designates a main effort it could not be shifted to another unit. I might have had the misfortune to encounter the only two majors who did not understand tactics fundamentals, but I do not believe so.

What should we do? There should be comprehensive exams on doctrine beginning in the basic courses and continuing through CGSC. At each level, students should be required to demonstrate a grasp of basic doctrine and a clear understanding of definitions and important terms. A CGSC graduate should be a doctrine and tactics expert. A graduate not in the combat arms should also display a similar grasp of combat support or

combat service support doctrine. This testing might strain students, but the gain would easily outweigh the cost.

We should teach doctrine at the CTCs and demand it be followed with regard to OPORD format using the MDMP. These great training assets should stress Army standards so we can all understand any order any headquarters issues. To ensure that correct, current doctrine is taught and enforced in all training environments, the Army should require each school or agency to visit and assess sites where doctrine is used.

The solution is fairly straightforward—devote ourselves to an appropriate study of doctrine, not just briefly flipping through the manuals before a CTC rotation or a warfighter exercise.

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Marshall Myth Revisited

I appreciate LTC Albert N. Garland's comments in the "Letters" section of the May-June 2000 issue of *Military Review*, about my article "Harnessing Thunderbolts" (January-February 2000). However, he has taken

me to task unfairly in certain areas because of his lack of information regarding my use of S.L.A. Marshall's observations on the battlefield behavior of soldiers during World War II and the Korean War. My rather brief mention of Marshall's findings is supplemented by my own substantial research in this area and corroborated by information other than Marshall's own. The remark was meant to provide some recognizable, if controversial, support for my overall argument that post-World War II improvements to control soldiers during combat are still evident today.

I largely agree with Garland's comments regarding Marshall's suspect methodology. I, my peers and fellow West Point instructors are fully aware of recent literature, appearing in a variety of forums, that effectively debunks Marshall's methodology. I agree that Marshall's data were not properly obtained in the scientific sense. Garland should rest knowing that US Military Academy cadets are not required to spout *Men Against Fire* dogma before graduating.

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